

## Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 1550

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CH, DM

SUBJ: BENIN: THE APOTHEOSIS OF MAO

SUMMARY: THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BENIN (GPRB) MOURNED DEATH OF MAO TSE TUNG WITH SERIES OF CEREMONIES MORE APPROPRIATE TO LOSS OF REVERED INDIGENOUS CHIEF OF STATE THAN TO PASSING OF FOREIGN LEADER. GPRB APPEARS TO BE ATTEMPTING TO SHOW ITSELF AS MORE MILITANT THAN ANY OTHER SOCIALIST STATE IN ORDER TO GAIN INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION. END SUMMARY.

1. GOVERNMENT OF PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BENIN (GPRB) HAS STAGED ELABORATE SERIES OF MEMORIAL CEREMONIES TO MOURN THE DEATH OF MAO TSE TUNG. DECLARING A WEEK OF NATIONAL MOURNING SEPT 10, GPRB SEIZED EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO ORGANIZE GROUPS, MAKE SPEECHES, BROADCAST CHINESE MUSIC AND OBSERVE MOMENTS OF SILENCE TO MARK MAO'S PASSING. ADORATION CEREMONIES COMMENATED SEPTEMBER 18 IN SOLEMN MEMORIAL ASSEMBLY IN PEOPLE'S PALACE PRESIDED OVER BY PRESIDENT KEREKOU. SURROUNDED BY MEMBERS OF THE PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND REVOLUTIONARY MILITARY GOVERNMENT, AND FLANKED BY CHINESE AMBASSADOR KU AND FORMIN ALLADAYE, KEREKOU READ LONG DOCTRINAIRE ENCOMIUM OF MAO AND HIS ACHIEVEMENTS. QUOTING EXTENSIVELY FROM MAO'S WORKS, CONFIDENTIAL

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KEREKOU DREW PARALLELS BETWEEN BENINESE AND CHINESE

LIBERATION STRUGGLES, AND ANNOUNCED THAT HENCEFORTH BENINESE WOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO STUDY MAO'S WRITING'S IN ORDER TO APPLY THEM TO THE BENINESE REVOLUTION, ESPECIALLY TO FURTHER THE NATIONAL FOOD PRODUCTION CAMPAIGN. FOLLOWING KEREKOU'S INVOCATION OF "GLOIRE IMMORTELLE" TO MAO AND PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA, THE CEREMONY CLOSED WITH THE SINGING OF THE INTERNATIONALE.

2. COMMENT: EVEN LONGTIME RESIDENT DIPLOMATS WHO HAVE BECOME ACCUSTOMED TO THE GPRB'S EFFORTS TO PROCLAIM ITSELF AS THE MOST MILITANTLY SOCIALIST OF THE SOCIALIST COUNTRIES WERE SURPRISED BY FAWNING TONE OF KEREKOU'S PRAISE OF MAO AND MAOISM. MOREOVER, IT IS THE FIRST TIME, AS FAR AS WE CAN TELL, THAT THE GPRB HAS PLACED SO MUCH EMPHASIS ON MAO'S WORKS.

3. KNOWLEDGEABLE OBSERVERS HERE BELIEVE THAT THE INCREASINGLY DOGMATIC ESPOUSAL OF MAO'S DOCTRINES AS WELL AS THE BLIND EMPHASIS ON MARXISM-LENINISM AS THE MAGIC THAT WILL TRANSFORM BENIN'S ECONOMY ARE ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE PREDOMINANCE OF THE MILITANT CIVILIAN IDEOLOGUES ON THE PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE'S POLITICAL BUREAU. THESE MEN, FOR THE MOST PART FRENCH-TRAINED RADICAL INTELLECTUALS, APPARENTLY BELIEVE THAT A CHINESE OR NORTH KOREAN DEVELOPMENT MODEL CAN BE APPLIED TO BENIN. THE POWER THEY EXERCISE WAS EVIDENT FROM PRECEDENCE GIVEN THEM IN THE PROTOCOL LINE-UP AT THE CEREMONY, WHERE THE MILITARY MEMBERS, INCLUDING INTERIOR MINISTER AZONHIHO, WERE PLACED IN BACKGROUND.

4. AT SAME TIME, BENIN'S STRIDENT PROCLAMATION OF ITS SOCIALIST MILITANCY IS SAID TO BE AIMED AT DRAWING INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION TO A COUNTRY THAT IS OTHERWISE UNKNOWN. APPARENTLY, VARIOUS SENIOR REVOLUTIONARY OFFICIALS BELIEVE THAT BY BEING AN "ENFANT TERRIBLE" BENIN CAN ATTRACT ATTENTION ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE.  
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